/13 cont./

576 enter a house is decided with the same ceremoniousness. Or, for example, when two horsemen meet each other in the forest. If the younger of the two has something to say to the older one, he must dismount and speak while standing on the ground. At that point, the older one urges him to speak without dismounting.

/14/ The language of the Abkhaz also bears witness to their politeness. In conversation they often use such expressions as: "I ask that your sickness will pass on to me," "may I become the victim of your sicknesses," "may I be the victim instead of you," "may I go around the place where you are lying," etc. In keeping with this last expression, an Abkhaz woman, when visiting her sick foster-child or a person she has not seen for a long time, walks three times around him with the words, "utsge mtsuge seizgat," i.e. "may I carry away your sickness, your misfortune."

[608] [155]

For every occasion in life, the Abkhaz has a special greeting, in which are expressed his wishes for prosperity, strength, victory, fertility, profit, etc. In this repertoire of various Abkhaz greetings, there are even some which are especially meant for occasions when one meets persons who are going to a horse-race, greetings for the person who is arranging the races, and so forth. And this is quite understandable and natural for a people such as the Abkhaz, for whom horse and arms constitute the most beloved things, which they have been accustomed to value highly almost from the cradle. The children of members of the upper classes in the very first years of their lives become excellent riders and weapon-bearers. Pistol, dagger, saber, knife, and a whole arsenal of weapons are the constant adornment of every Abkhaz man. For him there is no greater pleasure than to ride armed from head to foot, a burka thrown over him, in the company of his comrades, singing a merry song. Without a horse and arms, life is not worth living to an Abkhaz!

181 [565] [411] [293]

Besides horse-races and trick-riding, the following games are worth noting in the life of the Abkhaz: 1. the ball-game, 2. arkil-riki, and 3. stone-throwing. The folk-music and folk-poetry of the Abkhaz are extremely meager.

526 [541] 538

/37 cont./

777 been born; God save me from such a marriage." And so he
776 planned to kill the newborn baby; when everyone in the
539 house had fallen asleep, he slipped quietly in, carried the child out, ripped open her belly, and threw it upon the flat roof of the hut. Then the two thieves went on their way. The child's wailing awakened the women, who found her, sewed up the wound with silk thread, and thus saved her from death. And no matter how hard the thief about whom the above-mentioned prophecy was made tried to find a wife, he was /38/ unsuccessful. Meanwhile the girl who he thought was dead reached marriageable age and one day somehow met the thief. He immediately fell in love with her and married her. Then it was shown how inevitably every predestination and decision made by the "creator-forgers" is fulfilled.

VII.

Prayers in Honor of the Deities

782 Prayer is the name given to those religious ceremonies and rites accompanied by sacrifices in honor of the gods which are performed according to a definite pattern set and sanctified from olden times.

[776] Each deity may independently show, within his sphere of activity, grace or wrath toward man; for instance, he may send sickness or misfortune on him or his cattle, etc.
[787] The Abkhaz easily determine by special signs whether the
[688] deities' anger is the result of deviations from the fixed pattern of the religious rites. To avert the wrath of the gods caused by omissions in prayers and sacrifices, they must repeat the offerings and complete whatever was omitted the first time; uncorrected omissions and mistakes in ritual weigh heavily as guilt felt toward the angry gods, even upon generations
[755] far removed from the sinners. If anyone falls ill in conse-
[753] quence of neglect in ritual toward one or another god, he must offer him a sacrifice in order to recover. If he is

/38 cont./

782 unable to perform that act because of his sickness, he then
755 presents something as a pledge, saying, "If you (God) are
753 sending this (sickness) because of my guilt, then relieve me; I shall pray to you as is fitting and as the sorcerer will instruct me." But when he does not know which deity is angry and is causing his sickness, he says, "No matter what caused this illness, I shall do whatever the sorcerers may recommend." The pledge is specially set aside as a sacred object until his vow is fulfilled. The performers of prayers during such religious rituals are men or women, depending upon the sex of the deity in whose honor the ceremony is performed.

I shall proceed to a description of the ceremonies themselves.

1.

/39/

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755

The Ceremony in Honor of Mother Earth

A sinless woman, taking six nuts and a few grains of millet, leads the sick one to an alder tree. Here she carries the three nuts and several grains of millet around the tree in the name of the earth; then she does the same thing around a nut-tree (walnut) in the name of Adabna, begging him to have pity on the sick person. She then makes
[532] a richly-dressed doll in the image of a man, buries it in
[789] the earth for the "liberation" of the sick person, and says, "Play and amuse yourself with this instead of with the sick one." After this, a large millet-loaf is baked -- "the bread of Mother Earth" -- and two other long loaves of bread for Adabna. The same woman takes a piece from each of the four sides of the first loaf, both the loaves in honor of Adabna, a candle, and incense, and with the sick person goes to the crossing of three roads, where she places the pieces of the millet-loaf at one road, the two loaves of Adabna at the second, and at the third she lights the candles and places chevyaki (shoes) there, saying; "Mistress Earth, these are your shoes!" She then places the sick person on his knees

/39 cont./

782 among the articles so laid out, with a "chikila" (a kind of
755 veil) on his head, and begs, "Adgil-ankhu, Atula-ankhuse, grant him your favor! Give him firmess of head, heart, and body! Give him color, skin, and bone! Give him back the will to speak and to work! Give him strength! Deliver him from evil," etc. In the same way she also prays to Adabna. After this, she removes the chikila from the sick person with a nut-twig, raises him, strikes him on the back with a whip, and says, "Go, from this day I grant you freedom (azati)," and then both go home. At home a loaf of millet-bread is broken in two; two women each take a half and stand on the two sides of the hearth opposite each other; the sick person passes three times between them under the loaf, while one of the women exclaims, "Give me the one who has assumed the Hebrew belief," and the other, "Give me the convert to Christianity."

753 The Abkhaz is convinced that the invisible being that
755 settled in the sick man hastens immediately upon leaving him to enter someone else, and so, to help him find a new victim, they pray to him at the crossroads, where there is a continuous /40/ traffic of people, and, subsequently, a victim is always found it is unnecessary to search very long. And since an illness can be caught from a spot where a person accidentally fell or sat down, the rite of appeasing the
[823] earth must be performed on the very same spot of the falling or sitting from which the sickness originated; the doll must be buried on exactly the same spot. This is why, in order not to catch something evil from the spot where he sat down,
[789] the Abkhaz spits three times on getting up and says, "Here stood the house and courtyard of my grandfather!"

2.

The Ceremony in Honor of the Water

782 When someone is ill for a long time with a fever, a
755 female fortune-teller is asked for advice and help; she usually
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/40 cont./

782 prescribes a prayer to the water, which is thought to be the
755 cause of the illness. Since the protectress of the waters,
[791] the "Mother of Water," is a woman, a sinless old woman is invited to the ceremony.

796 A large, clear, inaccessible fresh-water lake is thought
[798] to be the residence of the "Mother of Water"; she may also dwell in a pure spring, untouched by anything unclean, such as a pig, etc. The "Mother of Water" sometimes comes out of her dwelling to the shore, and at that time anyone may see her. This is how the Abkhaz describe this "Mother of Water." She is a most beautiful, bewitching woman; her locks are incomparable and chestnut in color; her eyes are laughing. The Abkhaz who has been bewitched by her talks
753 to his comrades thus: "Eh, brothers, I have been vanquished
796 by the 'Mother of the Water,' and from now on I no longer
539 belong to your society. Recently I rode into a dense forest and saw a table spread there under a big oak; a mirror and a lighted candle stood nearby; the 'Mother of the Water' was sitting in front of the mirror, smiling at her own beauty and combing her long hair, which reached the ground. My arms fell to my sides from exhaustion; I could not take my eyes from that wonderful vision. When she saw me, she quickly arranged her hair and came towards me. I felt giddy... Without a word she raised all ten fingers, asking me, 'Are you willing to be my husband for ten years or not?' I shook my head, but she would not stop, and with the proper number of fingers raised, she offered me in turn nine, eight, seven years, and so on /41/ of marriage. As I kept on refusing, she finally raised her last little finger and fixed her gaze upon me. I immediately gave my consent..." (1).

1. "Etnograf. pis'ma iz Abkhazii /Ethnographical letters from Abkhazia/," Konst. Machavariani, Droeba, 1884-1885.

755
782 The "pure" old woman who was invited to the ceremony,

/41 cont./

755 782 unnoticed by the occupants of the house of the sick, takes some object belonging to the sick person, e.g., a dress, etc., and goes to the river. Standing on the bank, she says, "Mother of the Water, mistress, if the sick person was bound by you, unbind him"; she then touches the water three times with the object belonging to the sick person and scoops up a few drops of it with alder leaves, which she carefully carries home, where she fastens them to the ceiling above the hearth, convinced that the fever will then disappear like the water in the leaves; then she runs out of the house with the words, "May your sickness also run away like this."

[756] If the sick person feels relief after this, a praying-woman is invited in, a hen and a rooster are prepared with a stuffed loaf of unleavened bread, and three candles are molded, which are distributed in the following manner: the hen and one candle are allotted to the "Mother of the Water," the rooster and the second candle to her husband, and the third candle to their maid-servant, called Abzahav-Abzachav (benefactress). The sick person goes to the water with the praying-woman and kneels down. The praying-woman takes a candle, lights it and places it near the water, and addresses a prayer for the relief of the sick person to the "Mother of the Water" -- dzdzlan dzahvvazh khiphsha gvasha ("Mother of the Water," "mistress of the water," Khiphsha Gvasha); she lights another candle and makes the same request of the "lord husband" of the "Mother of the Water, finally she sets in place the third lighted candle and begs the maid-servant to serve as intercessor and mediator for the afflicted one with her "masters." Then she passes her hand over the sick person's back and gives him "azati" (liberty) from his ailment.

782 585 844 A similar ceremony is performed for the young bride on the occasion when she is for the first time "led out to the water" (i.e., taken to fetch water); it is also performed for a woman in labor so that she may have plentiful milk. In this case, if the ceremony cannot be performed in full, an egg for the "Mother of the Water" is thrown into the water during the prayer.

/41 cont./

515 782 823 [783] Fearing to defile it, the Abkhaz avoids bathing in running water; if he bathes, upon coming out /42/ of the water he takes three stones and says, "I sinned against you today; I went into the water and bathed, but you, forgive me." With this prayer, he passes the pebbles around his head with his hands and throws them into the water.

3.

The Ceremony in Honor of the Rainbow

753 [755] [782] [821] The ceremony in honor of the rainbow, which is not obligatory for all, is performed for the greater part on persons whose sickness, according to the female fortune-teller, is caused by the rainbow. A prolonged yellowness of the face, a weakening of the organism, instability of character -- the Abkhaz attributes all these to the fact that the sick person entered water at the very moment when the rainbow was drinking from it.

755 782 "Sinless" old women, having planned a sacrifice and promised a prayer, lead the sick person out to a brook; they take with them two fried capons, two stuffed loaves of unleavened bread in the shape of a tongue, and other provisions, as in the performance of the ceremony in honor of the water. On both sides of the brook, clean objects are laid out, such as clothes, silver, etc., a little bridge made of thread is thrown over the river from one bank to another. Having prepared all this, the praying-woman, with a doll that has been prepared beforehand in her hands, walks around the sick person, who is kneeling down covered with a piece of calico, and prays for him to the rainbow, known by the name Eliaphshi; then she takes a candle and addresses a similar prayer to the "Mistress Mother of the Water," and her "lord husband." After praying over the provisions she takes some [789] of each dish and throws it into the water; she places the doll in a pumpkin, and, after adorning the latter with lighted

/42 cont./

755 782 [789] candles, she lets it float down the stream, saying, "Amuse yourself with this one, instead of the sick person." Finally the old praying-woman passes her hand over the sick person's back, raises him, and having given him liberty ("azati") from his ailment, she sends him home, instructing him not to look around on his way back. The food brought to the stream is eaten on the spot by the participants in the ceremony; the remains from the table are thrown into the water and the dishes washed clean.

This prayer-ritual is considered the most sacred of all in Abkhazia, and the name of the rainbow, Atsaqva, is pronounced with great reverence. The Abkhaz claims that as [821] a consequence of this ceremony in the rainbow's honor the rain appears.

4.

/43/

782 The Prayer-Ceremony in Honor of the Wind (Phsharnha)

A large loaf of bread with cheese is prepared, placed in a basket, and carried some distance from the house. Here [776] a prayer is said to "Lady Wind" (a deity of female sex), in [824] which she is asked to bring good and to carry off evil and to [777] deliver them from all sorts of misfortunes, etc. Then the middle part of the loaf is cut out, carried into the forest, and hung on an oak tree near the top. The next day, the one who first comes near the oak tree feasts on this offering.

5.

A Prayer in Honor of a Tree

782 824 On Assumption Day, vitushki are baked according to the number of men in the family; then the master of the house, with his household, approaches any kind of young tree and, putting his foot on it, prays, "Tree, give me your blessing and happiness ... that I may safely come down

/43 cont./

782 824 from the treetop. May the fresh twig, when I step on it with my foot, first grow stronger and then, being strengthened, grow fresh (soft), etc."

6.

782 755 A Prayer in Honor of Adnqa or (the same thing) "the Outer Ones"

[775] [753] The souls of the dead, the "outer ones," are often the cause of sickness in man and his cattle. They often become angry, and the outward signs of such anger are frequent yawning, sleepiness, and general exhaustion visited upon the culprit. If the one afflicted does not satisfy the angered "outer ones" with offerings and prayers, an inevitable death awaits him. On one of the Saturdays a meal is prepared of young rams' meat, chicken, sour milk, and the meat of a cow, if the soul of a woman is angered, and all these provisions are laid out on a tablecloth under the eaves, on both sides of which are placed a dress and valuable /44/ objects.

The sick man or woman is placed in the middle of a circle and either a man or a woman, according to the sex of the sick person, prays and begs the living and the dead (Angi-phsngis) to have mercy upon the sick and to grant him health and to accept the food prepared for them. The person pronouncing the prayer for the sick one then passes his hand over the back of the sick person and gives him freedom from his sickness ("azati"). If the ailment is thought to be caused by the soul of a prince or of some other personage of [825] high rank, a tethered horse is untied and released in a field at the concluding words of the prayer: "This (horse) is for your soul." According to Abkhaz belief, such a horse soon swells up and dies.

/48 cont./

753 "hung on the girls' ears." Rheumatic pains in the knees, instability of character, general weakness of the organism of a person, etc. -- all these are consequences of a 789 "weighty cause." To avert the sickness, a button is fastened to the ear like an earring. An innocent and sinless woman 755 leads the ailing person to a nut-bush and makes him kneel; 782 she drives seven /49/ sticks of nut-wood into the ground around him, fastens a lighted candle to each of them, and prays [776] on behalf of the sick person to hanipha, the genius, walking along the rocks.

18.

Prayer in Honor of the Supreme Being

776 753 This supreme being is believed to be the cause of all kinds of sickness in man. When the body-temperature of a seriously sick person fluctuates greatly and he is alternately thrown into a fever and chills, when he faints or loses consciousness and regains it momentarily, and then begins to toss and become delirious, to sing songs, to mumble prayers, etc., the Abkhaz believe that all these severe pathological conditions are unmistakable signs of action by a superior force, by the supreme deities (Antsa r mzz) on the sick person -- "there is a divine cause." The Abkhaz are convinced that this "divine cause" has taken up its abode in the sick person and therefore they say, Antsa drthoup, i.e., "a god 755 came to visit." When the female fortune-teller confirms [787] that the cause of the sickness is indeed that "a god took up his abode" in the sick person, then everyone in the house must assume a gay appearance and rejoice instead of grieving, for "where the god has taken up his abode, there can be nothing but rejoicing." Therefore the village youth gathers in the house of such a patient and all begin to sing and dance, and even the sick person is made to take part in the dances and singing, if he is strong enough to do so.

[782] The prayer-sacrifice is carried out near the house on the edge of a forest. The offering is a goat or a kid, a

/49 cont./

755 782 ram or a lamb, together with loaves of bread, etc. All this is taken to the place selected, and the patient himself is led there. No women are present, for they are not [562] allowed to approach this sacred place. A venerable man, holding a candle, declares, "Great god, as is proper and as the fortune-teller has prescribed, the worshiper today stands before you; he has brought sacrificial animals and loaves of bread ... Have mercy upon him, be merciful to him, if he has sinned before you, forgive him. I beg you to let him go from this day forward, to leave him and free him like a loosened knot." While saying these words, the venerable man moves the candle around the patient, lights it, and places it nearby. He then /50/ takes another candle [776] and prays to Michael-Gabriel. Upon the completion of this ceremony, the sick person returns home alone, while the others sit down to a meal.

One such ceremony, however, is not considered sufficient for the send-off of so eminent a guest as a god. The [796] Abkhaz is therefore obliged to repeat the ceremony annually. One day a week is set aside as a holiday in honor of that same supreme being; this day is considered such a sacred one that the house even remains unswept, etc.

19.

Aphi

776 [821] Aphi (2) is the god and master of the thunder, lightning,

[113] 2. See Sborn. sveden. o kavk. gortsakh, No. V, Tiflis, 1871, pp. 15-16, article "Religioznyye verovaniye abkhaztsev /Religious beliefs of the Abkhaz/," by A. -- where, by the way, this deity is called Afy.

[782] and all atmospheric phenomena in general. The most solemn prayers in Abkhazia are offered in honor of this god.

/54 cont./

796 falsely the name of Aphi, who commands the thunderstorms, cannot be punished by means of firearms or side arms, which make up the specialty of Shasha, etc.

782 326 Oaths to Shasha are of two kinds: in the smithy and under the open sky. In the first instance, the smith, having placed the hammer on the anvil and crossed his hands on his breast, stands to one side of it, the one swearing the oath on the other side of the anvil, opposite the smith, and the one concerning whose affairs the oath is being sworn stands to the side. The one swearing the oath, having taken the hammer into his hands, says: "If I am guilty of that of which they accuse me, then may Shasha smash open my head on the anvil"; upon these words, he hits the anvil three times with the hammer, and the oath is considered sworn. In the second 782 instance, two sticks are driven into the ground, one opposite the other; on them are hung loaded rifles whose muzzles are trained on the space occupied by the one swearing the oath; those present stand to the side. The one swearing the oath pronounces, "If I said a lie, may Shasha shoot bullets through my head /55/ from these rifles," and he walks through the space between the rifles three times.

• 755 782 326 [787] At the first sign of sickness accompanied by headaches, the person who has taken a false oath asks his relatives to find out from a female fortune-teller the cause of his ailment. The fortune-teller, who has usually heard beforehand, from the blacksmith himself about everyone who has taken an oath, throws some beans and looks at the stars, and then indicates the cause of the sickness: a false oath sworn to Shasha on such and such a day, in connection with such and such a matter, and in such and such a smithy. One of the ailing person's relatives goes to the person concerning whose affairs the false oath was sworn and by gifts induces him to pray to Shasha to forgive the patient, promising, of course, that upon recovery the patient will give him complete satisfaction. Then they both go to the smithy where the oath was taken, and the

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755 782 326 sick man's accuser, taking off his belt to bear witness to the sincerity of his address to Shasha, approaches the anvil and utters a prayer in which he requests Shasha to deliver the guilty one from his ailment, with a pledge that after his recovery the sick man will come himself to beg for forgiveness from Shasha; then, leaving a piece of iron in the smithy, he goes to set the patient's mind at reast. If the sick man recovers, he satisfies the injured one and goes with him to the smithy, and, having put a small silver coin (no less than two rubles) on the anvil, thanks Shasha for his recovery; the ram, the bread, and the wine that he has brought with him are given to the blacksmith, from whom, after the prayer, he receives pieces of the ram's liver and heart; he sends these to his family as a token of Shasha's forgiveness. In company with his relatives, the injured party, and the blacksmith, he himself eats the food that was brought along in the blacksmith's house.

21.

The Prayer to Eyrig-aatsnykh

679 782 [776] [798] Eyrig-aatsnykh is the patron of stealing, plundering, and robbery. Beyond the river Bzyb this deity is called Chugurukhnykh; all the Abkhaz setting out to steal among the Ubykh, Shapsug, and other mountain-dwellers used to bring offerings to Chugurukhnykh, whose altar, if this expression may be used here, /56/ was located on a cliff beyond the fortification of Gagra. Prayers to this god are offered only by those who practice the "arts" of which he is the patron. An offering of four cone-shaped loaves of bread is brought; a prayer is said over them, asking a blessing upon the enterprise and giving a promise to sacrifice something else to the god in case of success. The loaves of bread are taken along on the trip. The thank-offering consists of something of the stolen goods, and if a horse or a head of cattle is taken, the sacrifice consists of a lock of the stolen animal's hair;

[766 cont.] Then one tries to console the dead (angip'sngis) with prayer and sacrifices of meat and sour milk, which are laid on a cloth under a protective roof near some clothing and, in the case of female souls, trinkets, and begs for the recovery of the stricken person, who stands nearby and whose back is stroked for "deliverance" (azati).

When someone has drowned and his body has been buried, his soul is supposed to have remained in the water and must be fetched out. For this purpose they hang a leather shoulder-sack on a silk string over the stream in question, and men and women stand on the back singing and playing the harp to entice the soul into the sack. As soon as the soul has slipped in, a man jumps into the water and ties the sack shut, he then takes it to the grave and allows the soul to enter into its body through a hole.

[767] Religious beliefs and customs. Christianity is supposed to have been brought to Abkhazia, according to the Georgian chronicle of Vakhtang V, about 40 A.D., but apparently did not find favorable soil, since there are no reports of successful propagation until the time of the Byzantine occupation of the coastal cities. Emperor Justinian had a large church erected at Bitshvinta (pitzunda) where the Abkhaz Catholics and the Georgian governor then had their residence. At the end of the seventeenth century most of the Abkhaz were induced by the Tatars to take up Islam, and only the Samurakhan remained faithful to Christianity, but the many ruins of churches and monasteries are regarded by them as holy places to which they make pilgrimages and on which they take oaths. Also several customs may have a Christian origin: use of wax tapers and incense, colored Easter-eggs, respect for the sign of the cross, fasting, eating of pork, and the like. The Cherkess, in whose lands few remains of churches are to be found, gave up Christianity for Islam later than the Abkhaz; the Kabardin were converted to it toward the middle of the eighteenth century, and the others, under Turkish influence, toward the end of the eighteenth century. Both religions, however, have exerted as little influence as among the mountain Georgians, for the old indigenous beliefs and customs have never been given up.

The gods of the Abkhaz are very similar to those of the Osset (see pp. 86 f.). A supreme god (Antsar mz) is ruler over

[770 cont.]

231 (atlar-tšoup'), they lay the animal on a quickly erected, three-
[182] meter-high framework or in a tree. The owner sacrifices an ox and prays to be spared in the future; then they eat the meat of the sacrificial animal, bread, and cheese, drink wine, and feast
766 the entire day. The Abkhaz proceed in the same way for a person struck by lightning, but no one may weep lest the god become angry (see p. 87).

789 During drought one also turns to Ap'i to send rain; an
[182] ox is sacrificed, and at the feast songs of thanks and praise (antšva-ryssva) are sung in alternating chant. In order to evoke rain magic similar to that customarily practiced among the Balkan peoples is used (cf. also p. 64). The girls from the village stricken with drought place a female doll embodying the drought on a donkey and lead it to the river; here they put the doll on a raft made of twigs and straw, ignite it, and allow it to drift. They pull the donkey by force through the water, and if he brays, there will be rain.

● 755 Various gods are called upon in case of illness. Ague,
[153] delirium, and the like accompanying serious illness are attributed to the presence of the supreme god (Antsar mz) in the body of the sufferer. In order to cure him, they sing and dance about him
[182] and even force him to do the same; then they sacrifice bread and a goat or sheep in the vicinity of the house, during which no woman may be present; an old man with a candle circles the sick person and pleads with the god to forgive him and deliver him. He also prays afterwards to Michael-Gabriel.

In case of fever they look for help from the "Mother of
[176] the Waters"; she lives, according to them, in a clear lake or spring, is beautiful, has brown hair and laughing eyes, and likes to live for a while with a man, like the mermaids. An old woman touches the water with some object belonging to the feverish person and begs the goddess to release him if she has enthralled him. Then she ladles up a few drops of water on some alder-leaves and holds them over the fire in the house so that the fever may leave as quickly as the water on the leaves. Finally the old woman moves away quickly, with the wish that the fever, too,

[770 cont.]

●755 might leave. As soon as the afflicted person is able, he himself goes to the water with a prayer-woman; there he kneels and
[782] offers up a hen to the mother of the waters, a rooster to her husband, and a candle to each of them and to her female servant (Abza'avabzatšav = benefactress, intercessor). The woman prays and strokes the sick person on the back for "deliverance" (azati).

If someone suffers from jaundice or debility, [771] the "irreproachable" elders lead him to the river, lay his clothing, silver articles, etc. on both banks, and make a bridge of twisted yarn over the river; the prayer-woman then circles the sick person with a doll and prays to the rainbow in the name of the Eliap'ši, to the mother of the waters, and to her husband. She
[782] casts into the water pieces of the food that was brought along: roasted chickens, tongue-shaped flat cakes, etc., and she allows the doll to float downstream in a gourd with a burning candle, while she prays that the goddess amuse herself with it rather than with the sick person. Finally she gives the latter "deliverance," and he may not look back on the way home (cf. p. 924 f. [untranslated]).

231 789 When rinderpest struck, the Kemirkehe used to dig a tunnel in a steep river-bank and in the middle of this a pit in which they fastened a black cat with a silver belt. They covered the pit with boards and earth, ignited a fire on top by rubbing two sticks together, and drove the cattle through the river and the tunnel, to the accompaniment of the priests' litany. Afterwards the cat was freed.

842 The above-mentioned threefold prayer at the water is aimed at fertility when one "leads to the water" a young woman
849 for the first time, during which an egg is thrown in, and, in the case of a woman in childbed, food for the infant.

787 [821] The Abkhaz read signs for future events, for a favorable or unfavorable outcome for undertakings, from the stars, from the form of the moon, from meeting certain animals or human beings, and also, in the manner of the Tatars, from the cracks in a sheep's shoulder-blade that has been cast into the fire (see Vol. II, p. 325).

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Aàzvibzhq

oak the Megrelians built a church in its honour, in which this icon rests to this day. It has not forgotten the Svans whom it often visits." My Megrelian informant is an inhabitant of Salkhino.

9. *Àhwsa-rəmshap'*

Abkhasians call the first Sunday after Easter Low Sunday, *Àhwsa-rəmshap'*, i.e. Pascha for women. This day is set apart for public games. Early in the morning everybody assembles in the public square where they indulge in all sorts of sport, chiefly, however, horse racing and tournaments. Next day the Abkhasians go back to work, and ordinary life is resumed.

The public games (on holidays) are continued till Whit Monday.

10. *Àdsyla-nəhwa*

In connection with *Àmshap'* mention may be made of two supplications, *Àdsyla-nəhwa* (cf. III (*d*)) and "*Supplication of the Leybaa*". I have not been lucky enough to have witnessed the latter ceremony, which, by the way, belongs to a cult of the Bzib Abkhasians.[1] The worship of the tree, so picturesquely described by ancient writers, such as Strabo, Procopius of Cæsarea, is preserved in a most conspicuous form with its sacred grove, in this supplication of the Leybaa *gvari*, as is also the name of the deity, in that of *Àdsyla-nəhwa*; *Àdsyla* denotes tree, *nəhwa* (*anəhwara*), praying, supplication. The deity of the tree itself is called *Àdsyla-intswakhwə*, wherein the latter part denotes "his (of the male rational being) part of god, deity". The Abkhasians in their religion personify and "intellectualize" all manifestations of life, and they strictly distinguish the gender of each of them.

In order to protect wanton children who roam about without restraint, and love to climb trees, the Abkhasians make offerings to the "spirit of the tree", entreating the "great part of the deity of the tree" to guard their children against falling off trees and hurting themselves. The objects offered are capon and cakes. The oak (*a-j*) they consider as the sacred tree, to which they make the offering; walnut-trees (particularly the hazel-nut-tree) and yoke-elms are "pure" trees. If someone falls from the tree they must dig up some coal from under the spot where the person fell; if no coal is found, the accident is regarded as serious; and the person will not survive the fall. An offering is also made to the "spirit of the tree" in the case of certain illnesses, as directed by sorceresses, the sick person being supposed to have fallen ill through having incurred the wrath of the spirit.

[1] About this see the article by N. Pateyna, in the *Collaborator of the Transcaucasian Mission* (in Russian), 1912, pp. 107–112, 134–7.

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
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who transgress against him. In order to avoid incurring the anger of this god, an Abkhaz will not draw water or wash himself when the rainbow is in the sky, and is generally careful about the use of water. Like any other god, *Atswaqwa* may bestow the " warmth of his eyes and his heart ", in return for offerings and prayers. Whoever is affected by his wrath, grows icteritious, emaciated, to save his life he must, at the direction of the sorceresses, make the following offering to the rainbow god :—

On one of the Thursdays [1] the old (" pure ") women take the sick person to the river, pass (Geo. *shemoavleben*) around his head 4–5 yards of variegated chintz, and pray : " The great god ! Acknowledging his transgressions this sick person (the name is mentioned) has appeared before thee, and humbly entreats thee to accept this chintz as a pledge that he will perform the established offering at the proper time, at the direction of the sorceresses ! "

On the following Thursday he is taken again to the same river and place. Usually three women say the prayer, but there may be seven. Men, with the exception of the patient, are not allowed to be present at this ceremony. The sick person is dressed entirely in white. The eldest woman [2] kills a capon and a hen ; women carry out all the duties, preparing *ashwamkydt'*, " *ghomi* " (millet pudding), *akwakwdr*, and *atcha-gvazdl* (Geo. *ghvezeli*, an oblong bread), of each of which there must be seven of the usual, and seven of the very small size. All these are placed on *ashwamkydt'*, on which also burn seven wax candles. The prayer is said by the eldest woman. The patient kneels in front of the offering ; he is taken home immediately the ceremony is over, and he must not look back. The seven small *akwakwdr*, *atcha-gvazdl*, and seven small portions of *ghomi* (*abdst'a*—millet porridge), are thrown into the water ; they represent the share of the female slaves (*aAt'ap'hwds*) of the rainbow god. Everything else is consumed by the women themselves ; the remains being thrown into the river, for nothing must be taken home.

Muhammadans must also burn candles at this offering. The candles are fixed on a kind of hoop made of grape vine. At the end of the ceremony the hoop with the burning candles is thrown into the river.

It should be noted that in some parts of the country this god is called *Atswaqwa-dlia* (the Rainbow-Eliah). So at least he was called, according to the testimony of D. I. Gulia, by Javaz, the famous woman supplicant.

[1] Thursday in Megrelian is *tsisAAa*, the day of the sky. It is noteworthy that the Abkhasians perform usually on the day of the sky, the majority of rites that are seemingly connected with the sky, as in the case given.

[2] The Abkhasian women kill animals only on occasions of certain offerings.